

**FILE ONLY**CARROLL DAILY TIMES HERALD (IA)  
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# Churdan resident views life in Nicaragua

By LARRY DEVINE

Times Herald News Editor

Julia Anderson believes Americans should learn as much as they can about the Nicaragua situation and then contact their government representatives and express their views.

"I'm learning, too. I don't have all the answers," Anderson said. "I would like to get some countrywide participation, increase awareness of Central America issues and peace in general, and how local people can effect change."

Anderson may not know all the answers about the proper course of U.S. action in Nicaragua, but she has made a considerable effort to learn about conditions there.

Anderson is the Greene County public health nurse and lives in Churdan. She visited Nicaragua for 2½ weeks in January.

The visit left her with these impressions:

— Although the country still faces major economic problems, progress has been made in redistributing the country's wealth and resources more equitably.

— Gains have been made in providing health care and education opportunities to all the people.

— The Contras, or rebels, are unable to win popular support for their opposition against the Sandinista government. The people fear loyalists of former leader Gen. Anastasio Somoza would regain power and reinstitute an oppressive regime.

Anderson, 28, is a member of the Iowa Campaign to Stop the War in Central America, whose aim is to lobby Congress to discontinue aid to the Contras. The group was formed last August, and the Rev. Steve Clinton, a Methodist minister from New Virginia, is its coordinator.

The Iowa group persuaded Iowa Sen. Charles Grassley to schedule a briefing in Washington, D.C., Friday to hear arguments on President Reagan's plan to force negotiations between the rightist Contras and the Sandinistas.

Reagan has asked Congress to approve \$14 million in humanitarian aid for the Contras. But if negotiations between the two sides broke down after 60 days, Reagan said, the United States would begin providing weapons to the rebels.

Representing the Iowa Campaign to Stop the War in the briefings will be former CIA analyst David MacMichael, retired U.S. Army Col. Edward King and former New York Times correspondent Raymond Bonner. Grassley has invited State Department and CIA officials to represent the Reagan administration's position.

All the other Iowa congressmen have also been invited to attend the briefing. Congressional votes on the administration's Nicaragua aid plan are scheduled next week.

Anderson praised Grassley for his willingness to hear arguments on the proposal. She said Grassley has previously supported aid for the rebels.

Nearly 95,000 U.S. servicemen are stationed in Central America, according to Clinton.

The Iowa Campaign to Stop the War in Central America is affiliated with the national Pledge of Resistance.

Nearly 80,000 Pledge of Resistance members nationwide and more than 1,000 in Iowa have signed pledges saying that they will participate in a form of civil disobedience — occupying federal buildings — if the United States escalates military involvement in Central America.

But that action would be a last resort, Clinton said. The group's primary campaign includes lobbying congressmen, holding vigils and education efforts.

Anderson is one of nearly 550 Iowans who have signed a pledge of support saying they will support the Pledge of Resistance members through vigils and demonstrations, but will not participate in civil disobedience.

Several years ago, Anderson served as the Greene County coordinator for a campaign advocating a freeze on nuclear weapons. She said that led to her participation in the Central American campaign, since many of the same people were involved in the freeze campaign.

Johnson initially planned to visit Nicaragua with a group representing the Health Policy Advisory Center from New York. The center studies health care in various countries and publishes reports on its findings. That group canceled their trip at the last moment. But, Anderson said, a friend in California who has done volunteer medical work in Nicaragua persuaded

her to make the trip anyway.

She traveled throughout the country by herself on buses. A ride of about 100 miles cost only 20 cents, she said, but travel conditions were uncomfortable.

"We were packed in with chickens and had no seats," she said.

She said she had trouble understanding the Spanish dialect in Nicaragua, so she had to ask the people to speak slowly or rely on interpretation by Europeans on North Americans in the country.

Anderson said she traveled to several areas in Nicaragua and visited with the people and health professionals there.

Major health and literacy campaigns are under way in the country, she said. Health professionals have conducted immunization campaigns seeking to eliminate polio, tuberculosis, measles, whooping cough and other diseases, she said.

"Before, 10 percent of the people received 90 percent of the health care," she said. "Now they try to make it more equitable by making it free to everybody."

However, the country has a shortage of hospitals, medicine and health professionals, she said. She added that health clinics occasionally are targets of rebel attacks. After one is destroyed, she said, "who knows how long it will be before another one is built?"

Before the Sandinistas overthrew Somoza, the literacy rate was very low, Anderson said.

"The whole idea of the revolution entailed education of the people," she said. "We know from our own history when it was illegal to teach slaves to read or write, it was easier to keep them dependent on the slave owners. That was the system they had there."

"Since the revolution, the focus has been on a healthy, educated people who can be productive and realize health, education and well-being because of their participation at all levels."

A shortage of qualified teachers to educate the people has been a barrier to improving literacy, Anderson said.

Volunteers from Canada and several western European countries are helping Nicaragua, Anderson said. But, she said, the Nicaraguan people do not un-

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derstand why the U.S. government is withholding assistance.

"They questioned me why the United States won't let Nicaragua be Nicaragua," she said. She said the Nicaraguans don't want to be controlled by either the United States or the Soviet Union.

"They don't want communism. They want to be a socialist, non-aligned nation," she said.

The people reject the Contras because many of the rebels formerly were Somoza's national guardsmen, Anderson said.

"They represent oppression and murder of the people," Anderson said.

"(The people) don't want to go that route again," she added.

Anderson said she traveled in the country without restrictions and found the people to be friendly.

"I was afraid because of the history of the U.S. government supporting Somoza. I thought the people may feel hostile," she said. "But it was just the opposite. They were open and friendly people. They expressed that they wanted to live in their country in peace."

Anderson said she has provided literature and presented slide shows on Nicaragua in the Churdan area.

"Maybe if the people find out who the Contras are and what they are trying to do, and who the Sandinistas are and what they are trying to do, then (Americans) can make some knowledgeable choices....People have to be informed to make humanitarian decisions that will help all the people in Central America."